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**Ogata et al.**

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(54) **FASTENING DEVICE**

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**F16B 31/04** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**

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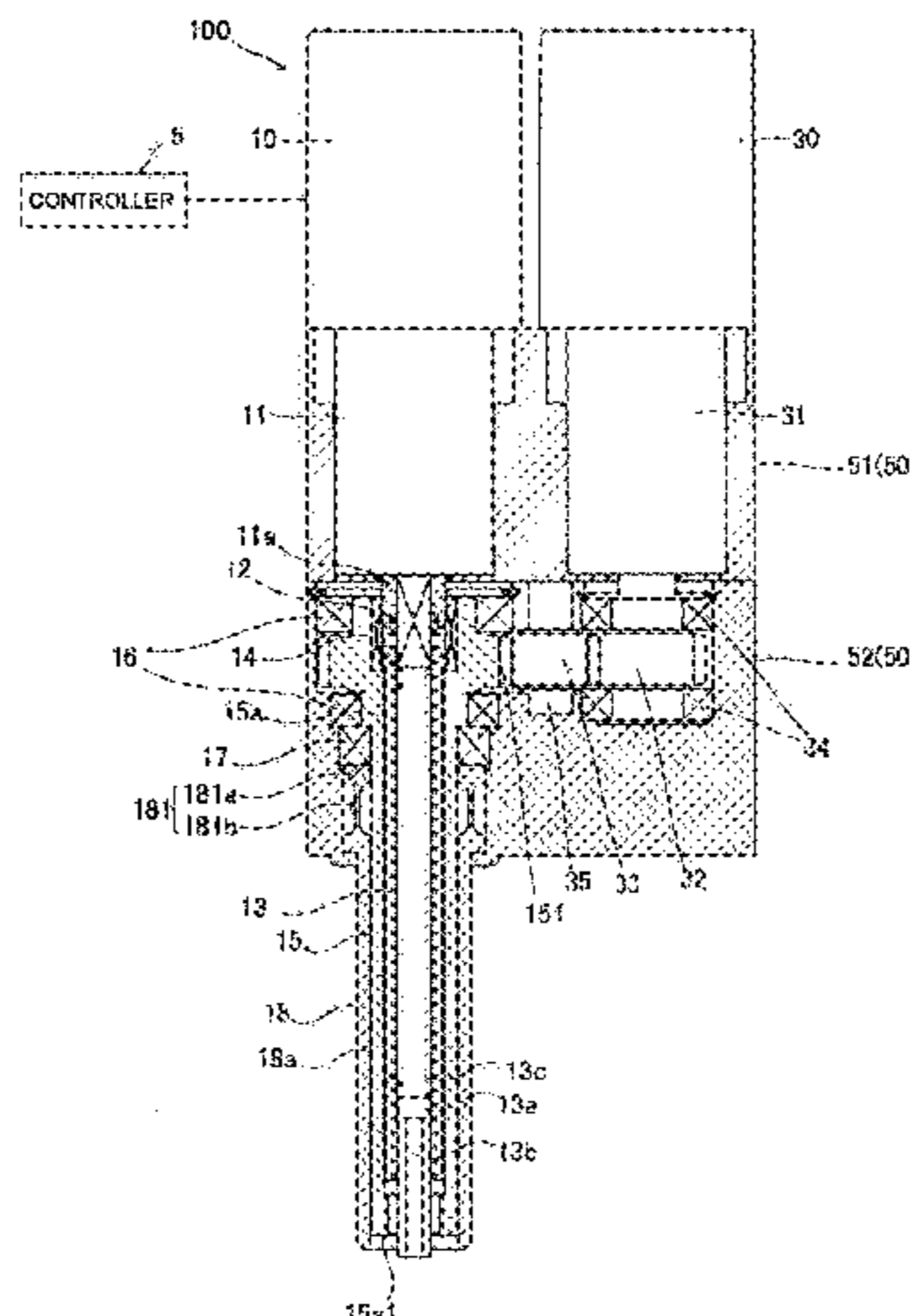
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

In a fastening device for fastening a bolt, a male thread is formed on a side surface of a bolt head part, and a part to be engaged is formed on a top surface of the bolt head part. The fastening device includes a bit having a tension rod having a rod female thread part, and an engaging part installed inside the tension rod and engaging the engaged part, the bit causing the bolt to rotate where the engaged part and engaging part are engaged; a supporter surrounding the tension rod in the circumferential direction such that the lower end part thereof protrudes below the lower end part; a sensor for sensing vertical compression force acting on the supporter; a first motor for causing the bit to rotate about the axis; and a second motor for causing the tension rod to rotate about the vertically extending axis.

**5 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets**



(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
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           F16B 35/06; B25B 29/02; B25B 23/12;  
           B25B 21/002; B25B 23/147; B25B 21/00;  
           B25B 15/008; B25B 23/00  
 See application file for complete search history.

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FIG. 1

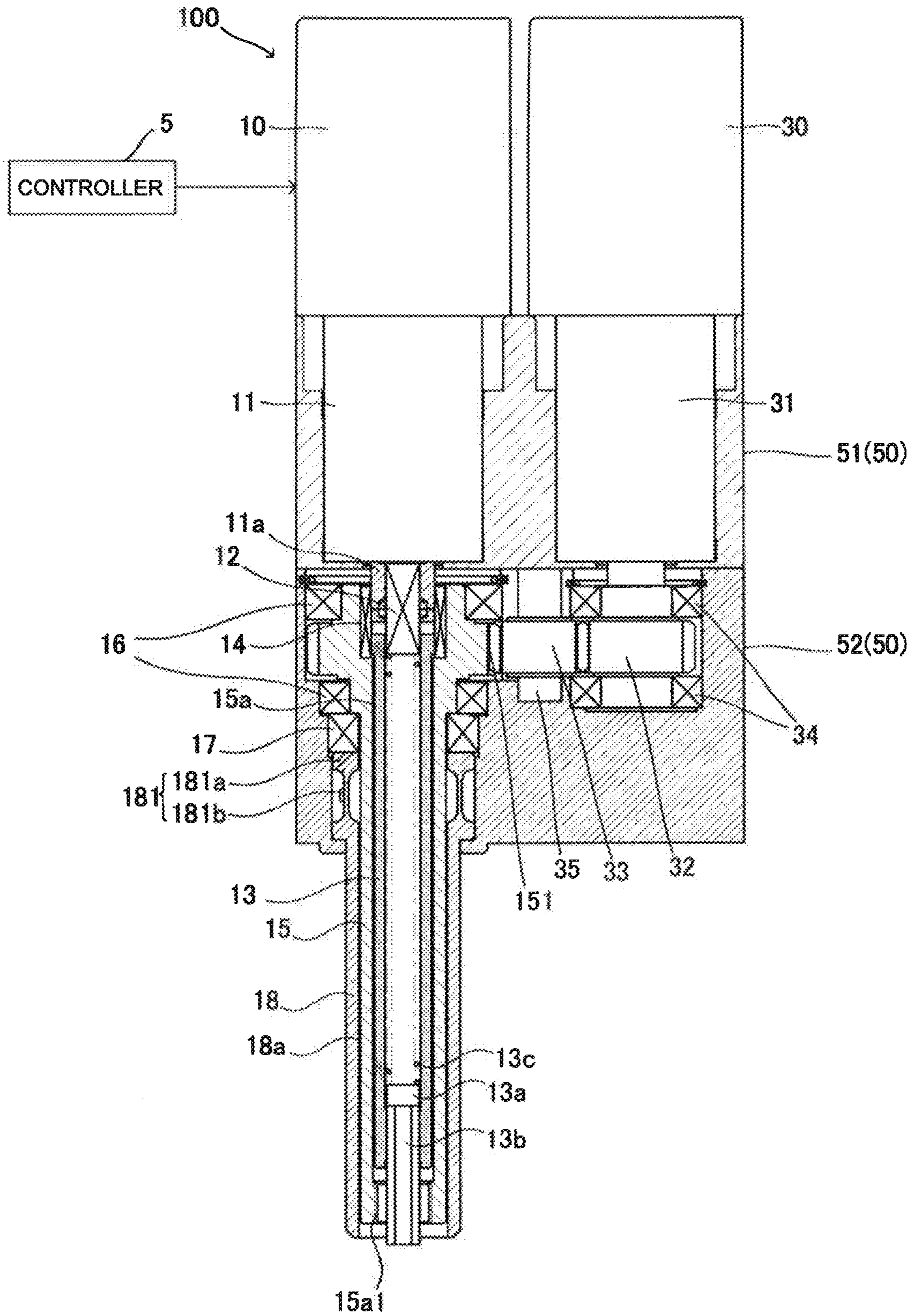


FIG. 2

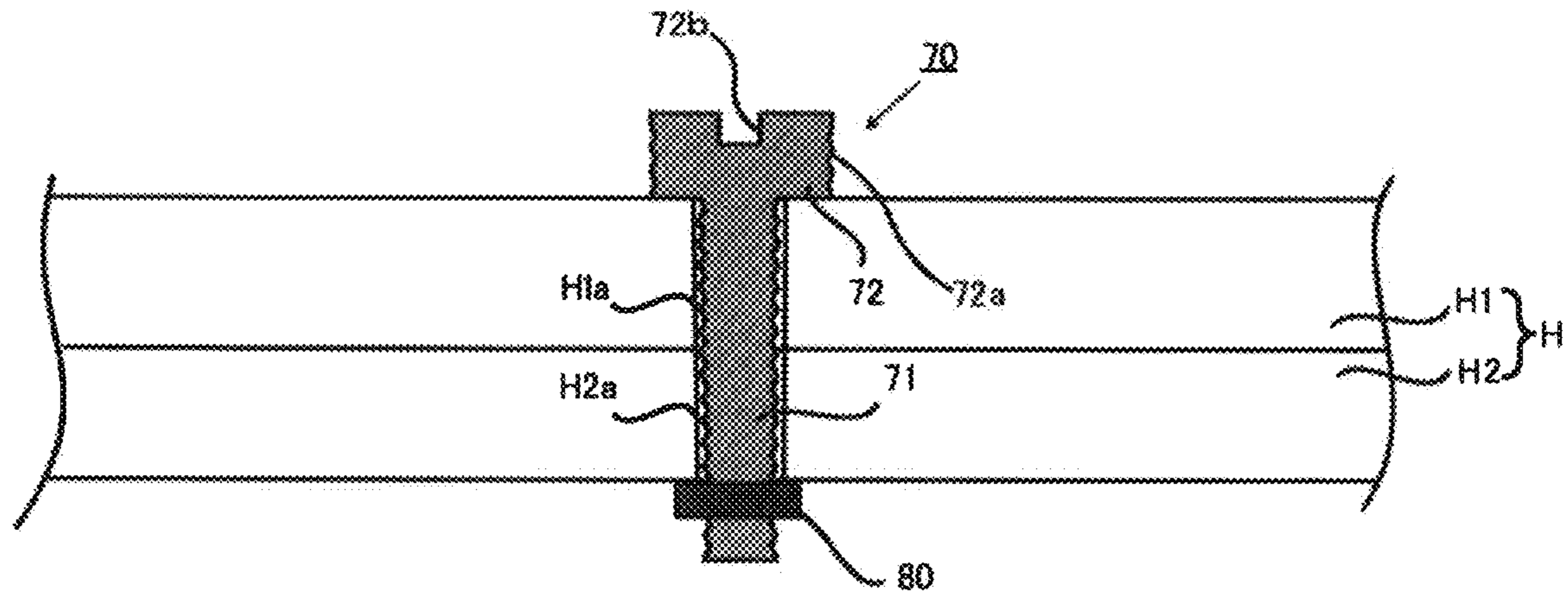


FIG. 3

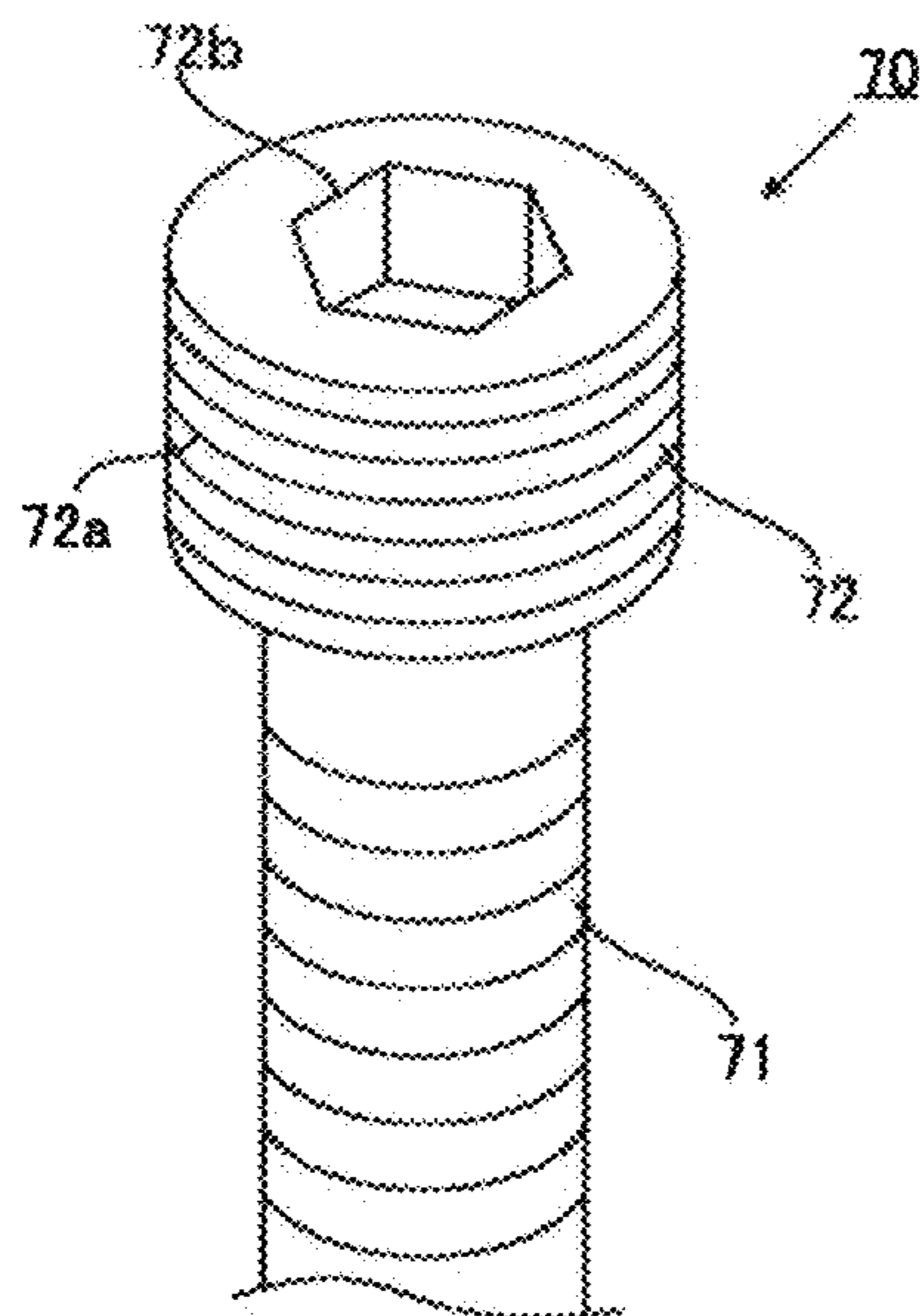


FIG.4(a)

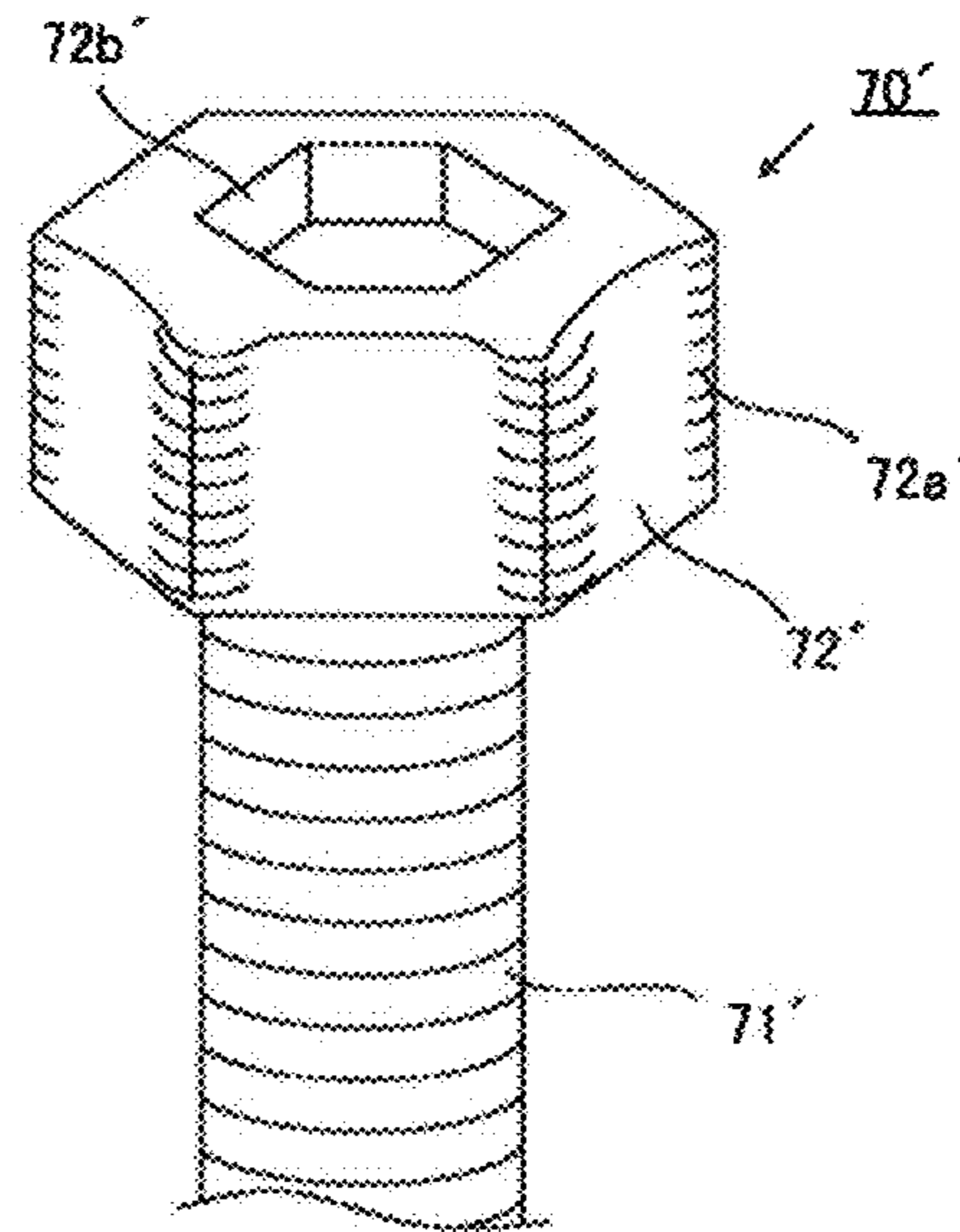


FIG.4(b)

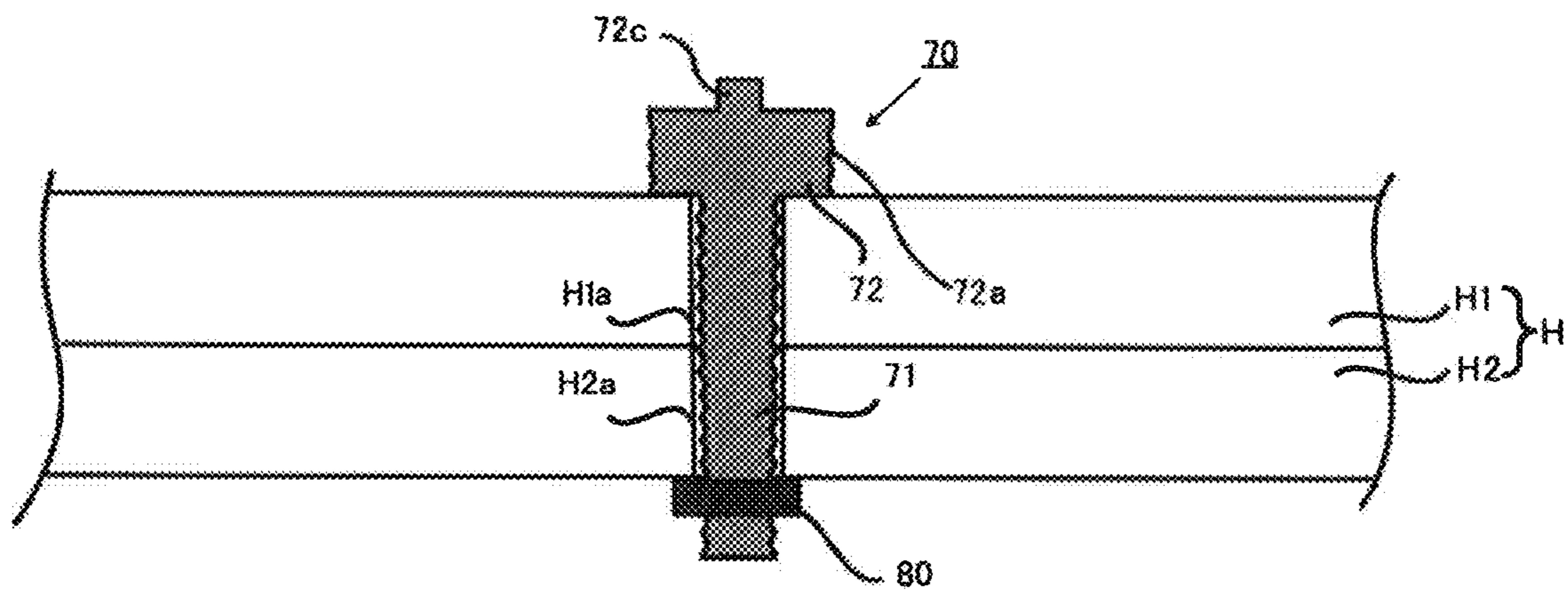


FIG.5

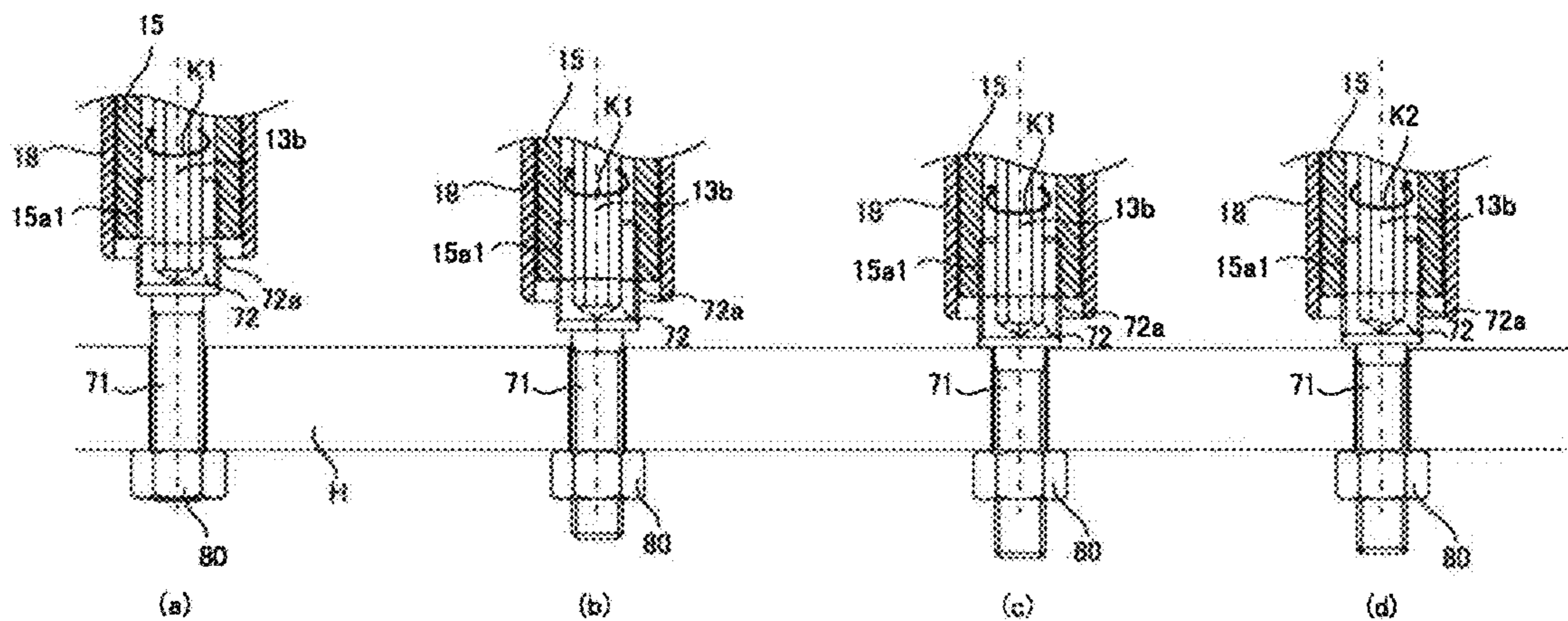


FIG. 6

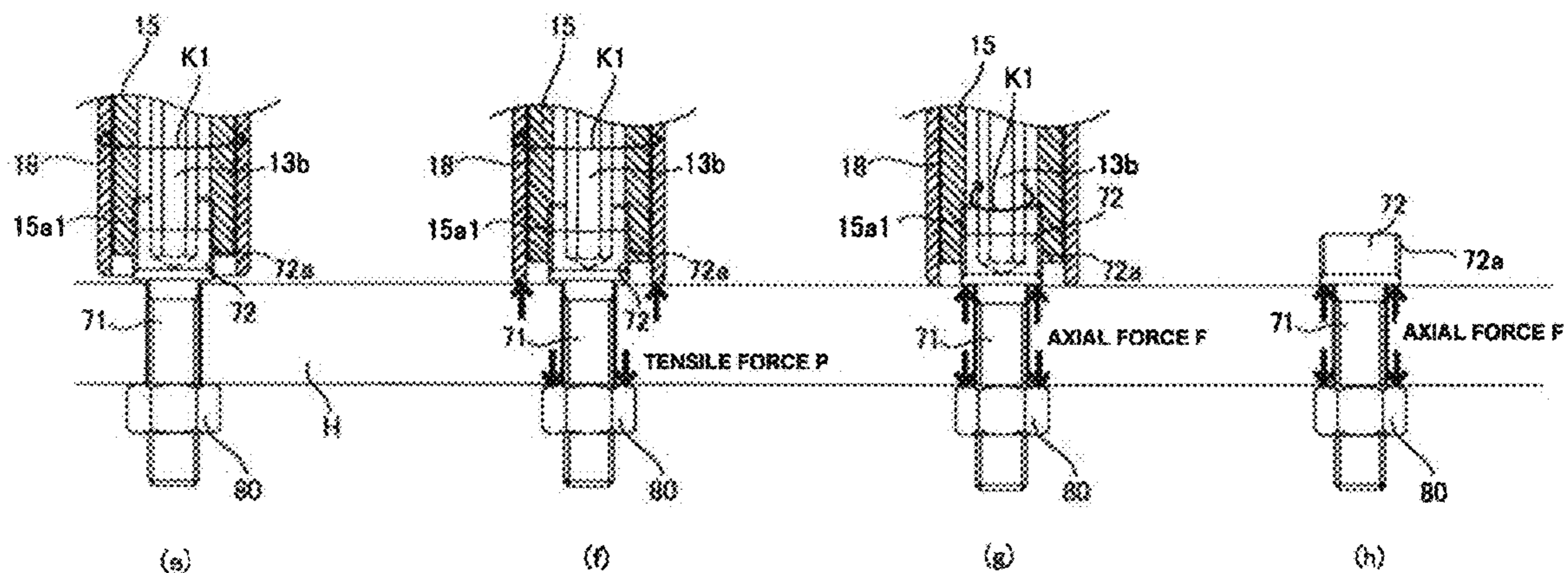


FIG. 7

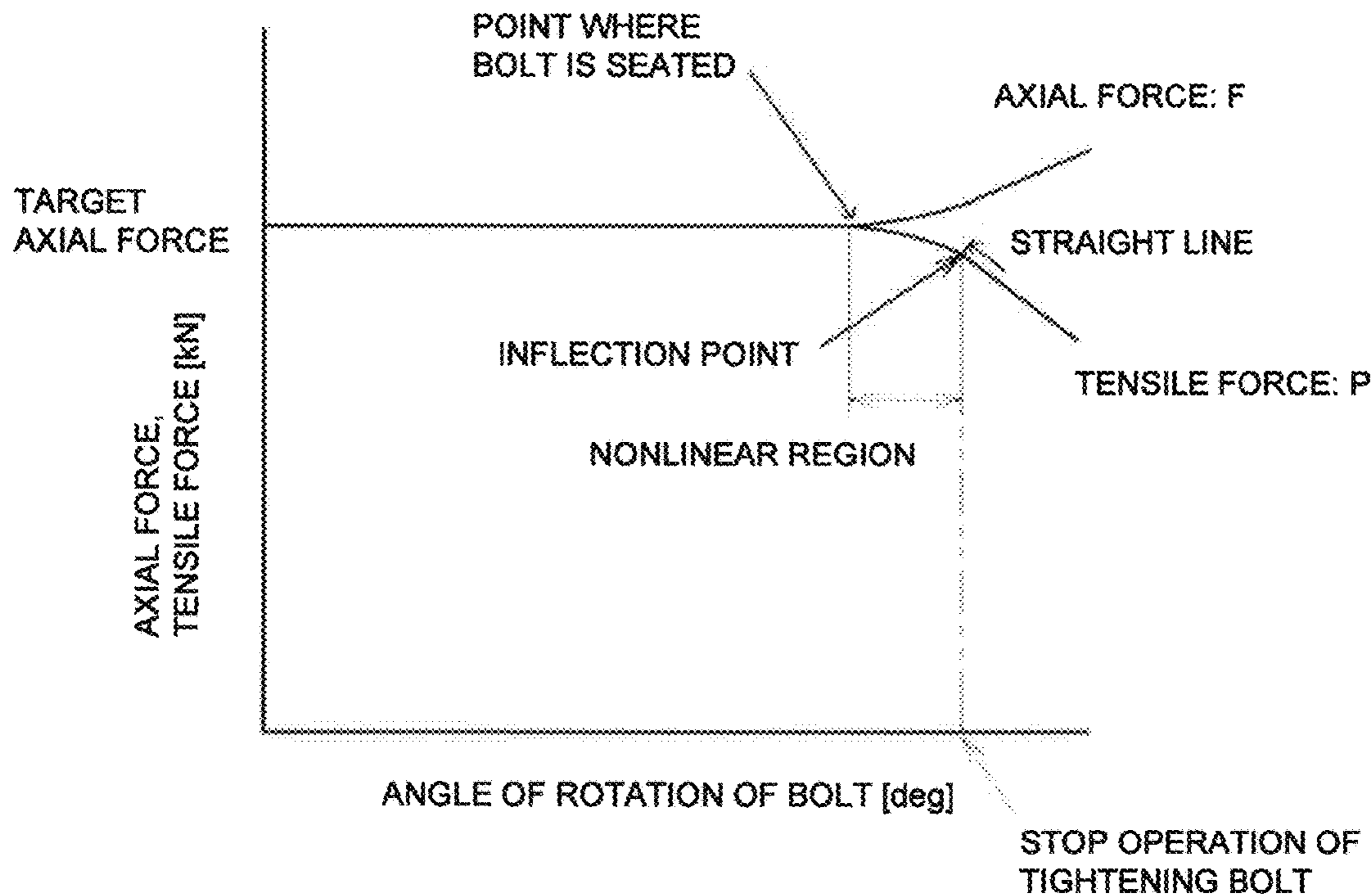


FIG.8

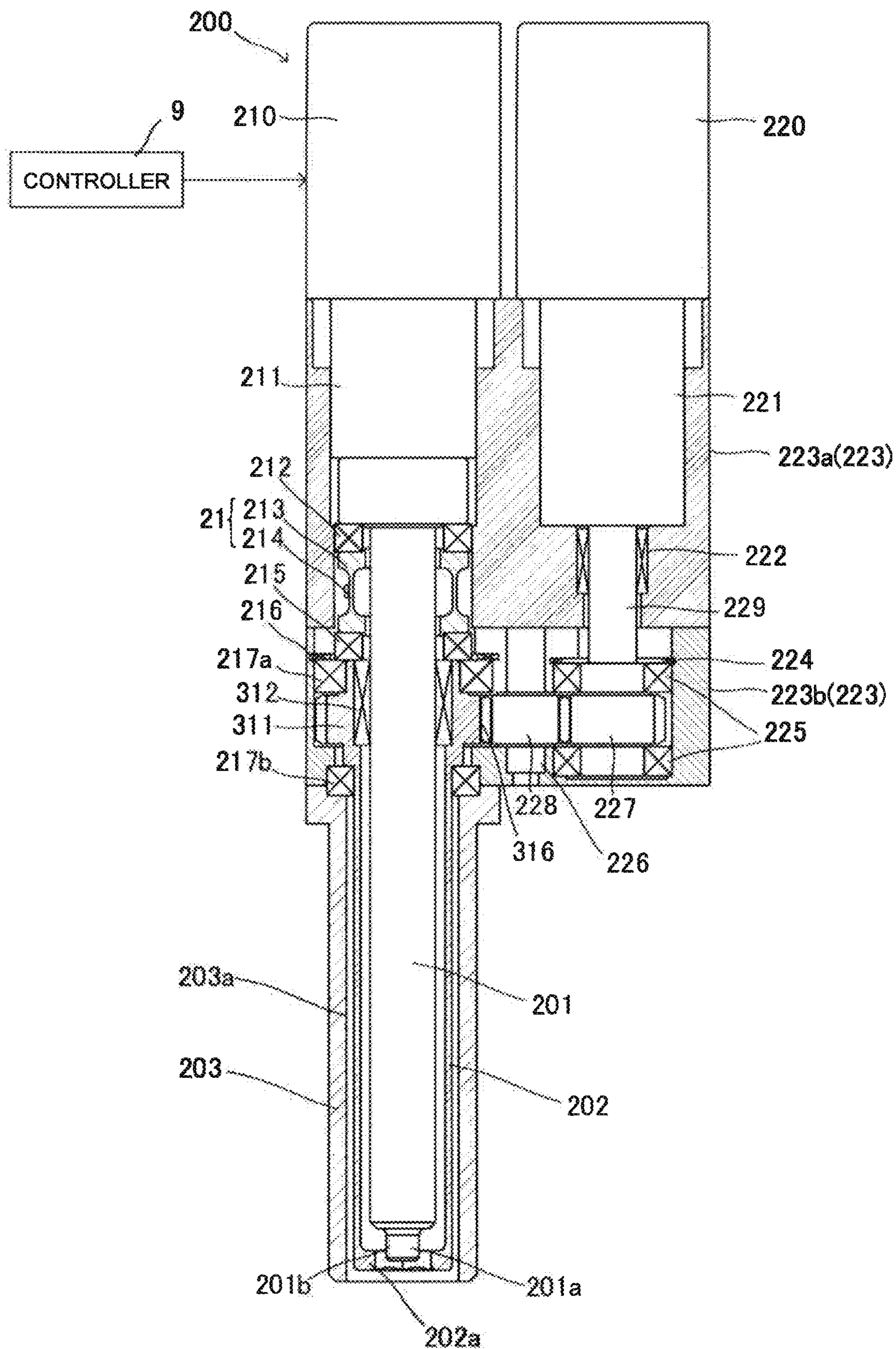


FIG.9

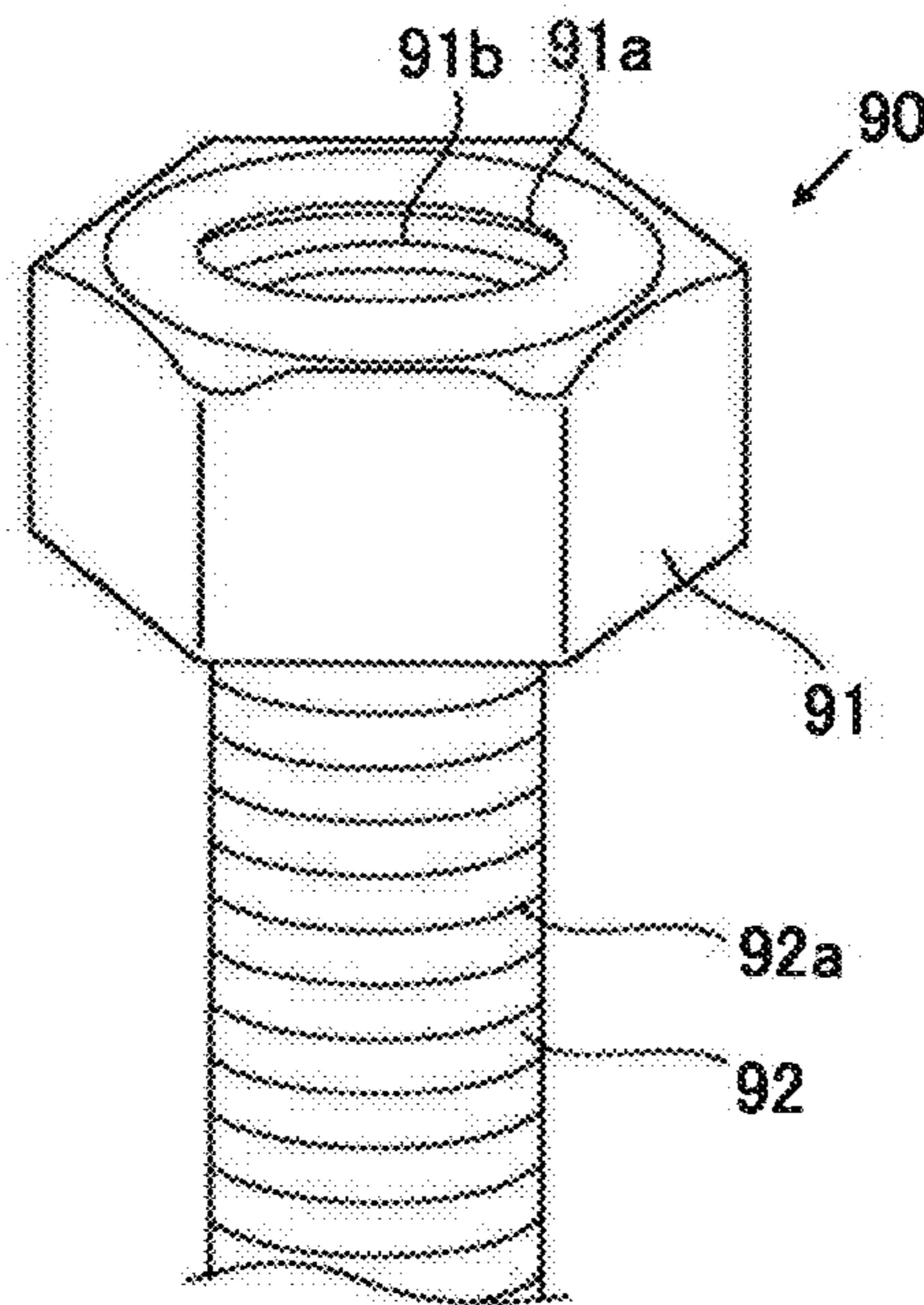


FIG.10

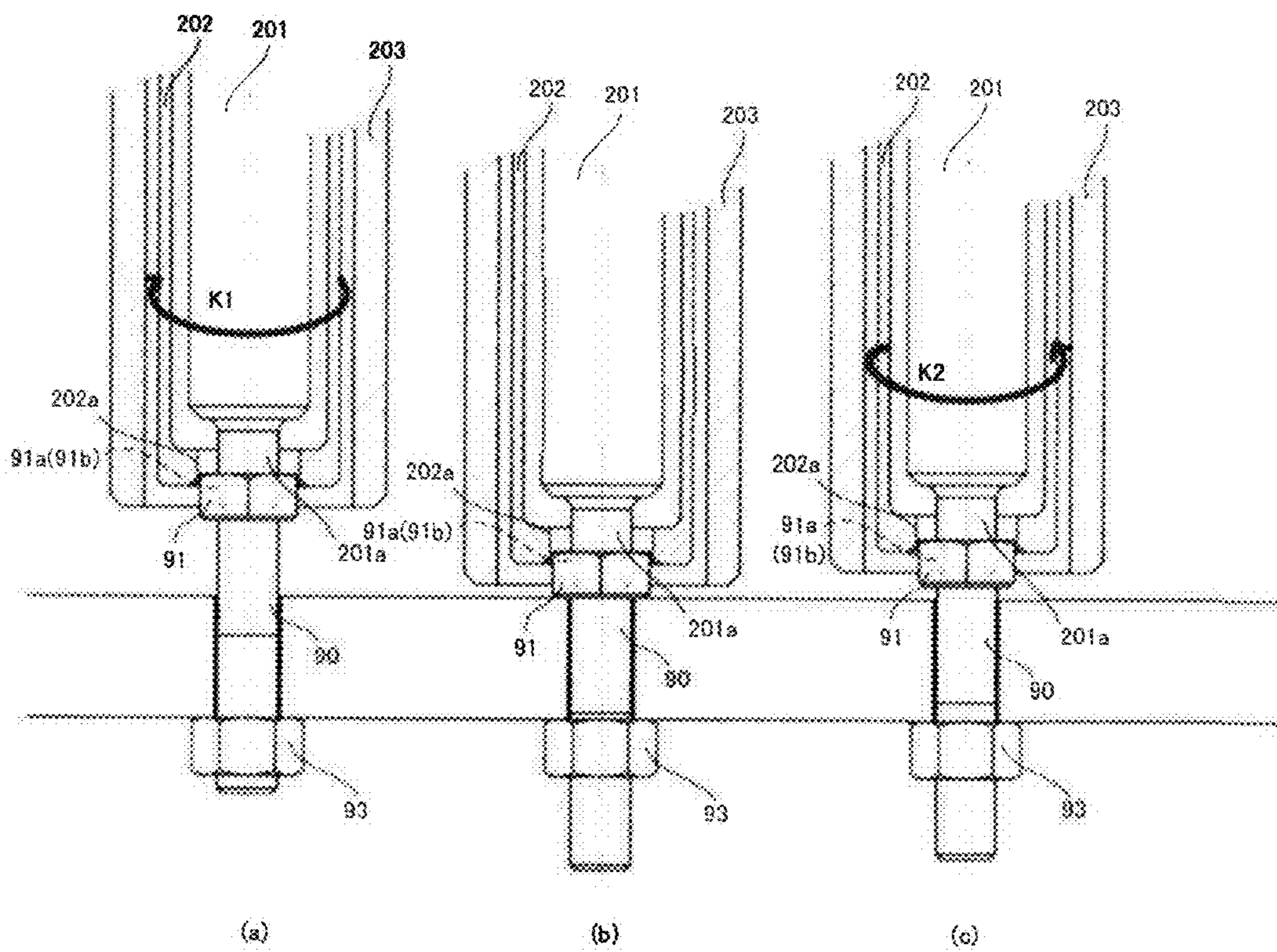
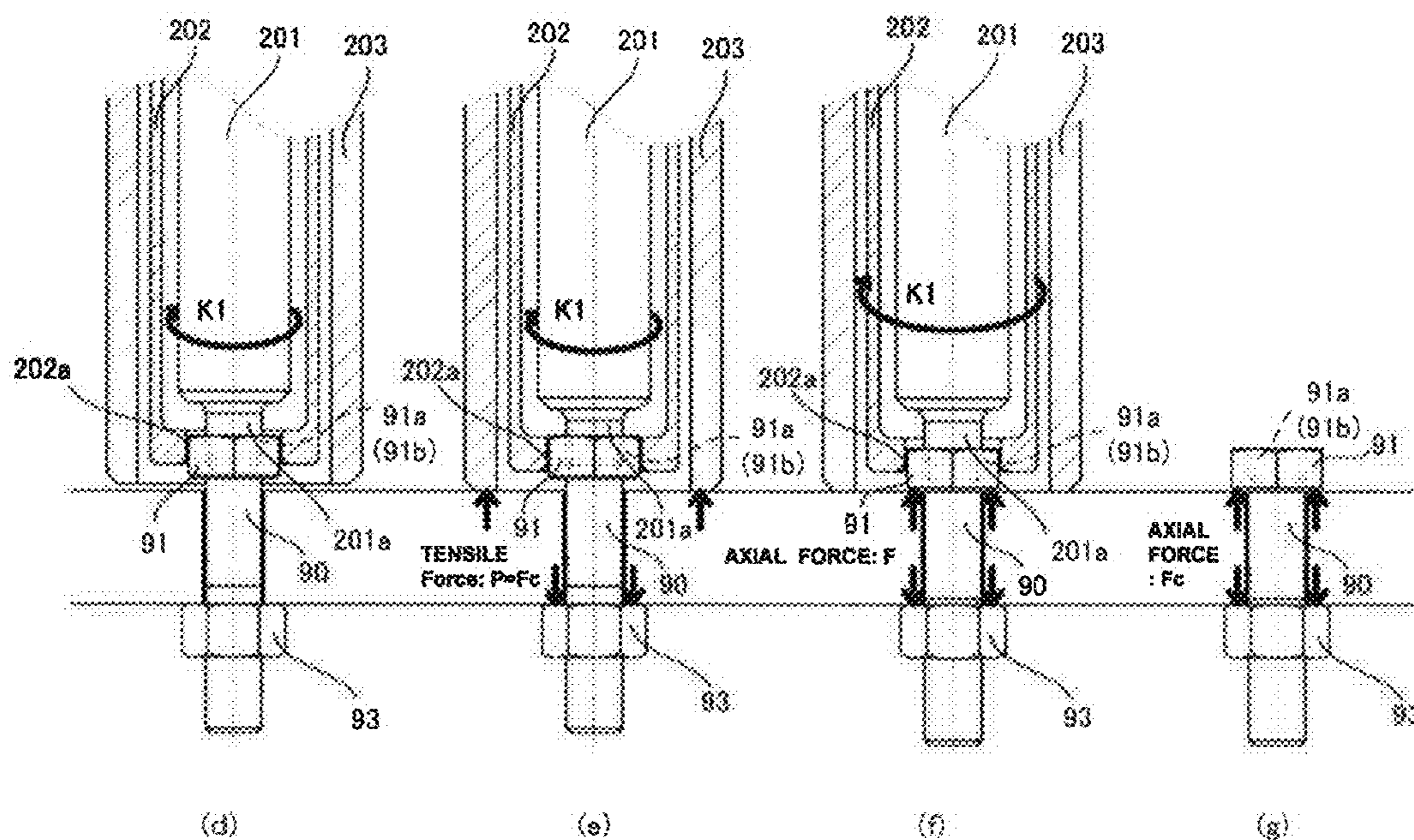




FIG. 11



**1****FASTENING DEVICE**

## RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is National Phase of International Application No. PCT/JP2019/019250 filed May 15, 2019, and claims priority from Japanese Application No. 2018-231252, filed Dec. 11, 2018, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

## TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a fastening device that fastens a bolt to a fastening target object.

## BACKGROUND ART

A bolt/nut fastener is used to assemble and fix a large number of mechanical structures including an automobile as a representative example. Patent Literature 1 discloses a bolt having a male screw section formed around the outer circumferential surface of the bolt head section.

## CITATION LIST

## Patent Literature

Patent Literature 1: Japanese Patent No. 6,381,840

## SUMMARY OF INVENTION

## Technical Problem

An object of the present invention is to automate bolt fastening operation.

## Solution to Problem

To achieve the object described above, the invention of the present application relates, as a viewpoint, to (1) a fastening device for fastening a bolt to a fastening target object, the bolt so configured that a bolt head section male screw section is formed around a side surface of a bolt head section and an engagement receiving section is formed at a top surface of the bolt head section, the fastening device including a tension rod including a rod female screw section that engages with the bolt head section male screw section, a bit that is so disposed inside the tension rod as to be movable in an upward/downward direction, includes an engagement section that engages with the engagement receiving section, and rotates the bolt around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction with the engagement receiving section engaging with the engagement section, a supporter that is disposed in a position where the supporter circumferentially surrounds the tension rod and has a lower end section protruding downward beyond a lower end section of the tension rod, a sensor for sensing compression force acting on the supporter in the upward/downward direction, a first motor for rotating the bit around the axis, and a second motor for rotating the tension rod around the axis.

(2) The fastening device described in item (1) above, in which a bolt shaft male screw section is formed around a shaft section of the bolt, and the rod female screw section and the bolt shaft male screw section have the same screw pitch.

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(3) The fastening device described in item (1) or (2) above, in which a tubular holder is disposed inside the tension rod, and a magnet, the bit attracted by the magnet, and a spring that urges the magnet downward are disposed in the holder.

(4) The fastening device described in any one of (1) to (3) above, in which the engagement receiving section is an insertion hole, and the engagement section is a lower end section of the bit inserted into the insertion hole.

(5) The invention of the present application relates, as another viewpoint, to a fastening device for fastening a bolt to a fastening target object, the bolt so configured that a bolt head section female screw section is formed in an inner circumferential surface of a recess provided in an upper surface of a bolt head section, the fastening device including a tension rod including a rod male screw section that engages with the bolt head section female screw section, a drive socket that is disposed in a position where the drive socket circumferentially surrounds the tension rod and has a lower end section including a grasper for laterally grasping the bolt head section, a supporter that is disposed in a position where the supporter circumferentially surrounds the drive socket and has a lower end section protruding downward beyond a lower end section of the drive socket, a sensor for sensing compression force acting on the supporter in the upward/downward direction, a first motor for rotating the tension rod around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction, and a second motor for rotating the drive socket around the axis.

(6) The fastening device described in (5) above, in which a bolt shaft male screw section is formed around a shaft section of the bolt, and the rod male screw section and the bolt shaft male screw section have the same screw pitch.

(7) The fastening device described in (5) or (6) above, in which a projection is formed at a lower end section of the tension rod, and the rod male screw section is formed around an outer circumferential surface of the projection.

## Advantageous Effects of Invention

The configuration of above-mentioned item (1) of the present invention allows automated tightening of a bolt so configured that a male screw section is formed around the outer circumferential surface of a bolt head section. The configuration of above-mentioned item (5) of the present invention allows automated tightening of a bolt so configured that a bolt head section female screw section is formed in the inner circumferential surface of a recess in the top surface of a bolt head section.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a fastening device (first embodiment).

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of a fastening target object and a bolt (first embodiment).

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the bolt (first embodiment).

FIG. 4(a) is a perspective view of a bolt (variation).

FIG. 4(b) is a cross-sectional view of a fastening target object and a bolt (variation).

FIG. 5 describes the action (first half) of the fastening device according to the first embodiment.

FIG. 6 describes the action (second half) of the fastening device according to the first embodiment.

FIG. 7 shows graphs illustrating the relationship among the angle of rotation of the bolt, axial force acting on the bolt, and tensile force acting on the bolt.

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of a fastening device (second embodiment).

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of part of a bolt (second embodiment).

FIG. 10 describes the action (first half) of the fastening device according to the second embodiment.

FIG. 11 describes the action (second half) of the fastening device according to the second embodiment.

#### DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view showing a fastening device 100. The fastening device 100 includes a first motor 10, a second motor 30, and an enclosure 50. The first motor 10 and the second motor 30 are independent of each other and driven and controlled by a controller 5. That is, the controller 5 can control the first motor 10 and the second motor 30 independently of each other. The controller 5 can, for example, be a CPU (central processing unit).

The enclosure 50 includes a body 51 and a base 52, which has a recessed upper end fixed to the lower surface of the body 51. The body 51 accommodates a first decelerator 11 and a second decelerator 31. The first decelerator 11 includes an output shaft 11a. The output shaft 11a has a tubular shape, and a power transmitter 12 is inserted into and fixed to a tubular section of the output shaft 11a. The power transmitter 12 rotates along with the output shaft 11a. A lower end section of the power transmitter 12 protrudes downward beyond the output shaft 11a, and the protruding section extends toward the interior of a tubular bit holder 13, which extends in the upward/downward direction, and is fixed. The rotational output produced by the output shaft 11a is therefore transmitted to the bit holder 13 via the power transmitter 12 to allow rotation of the output shaft 11a and the bit holder 13 integrated with each other.

The output shaft 11a and the bit holder 13 are disposed in a roughly coaxial manner and so supported as to be rotatable relative to a bearing 14. A magnet 13a is provided in the bit holder 13 and attracts a bit 13b for rotating a bolt. The bit 13b extends downward and extends beyond the lower end section of the bit holder 13. In the configuration described above, rotating the bit holder 13 allows the bit 13b to rotate around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction.

The magnet 13a and the bit 13b are so accommodated in the tubular bit holder 13 as to be slidably movable in the upward/downward direction, and a spring 13c is interposed between the magnet 13a and the power transmitter 12. The spring 13c is disposed along the inner wall of the bit holder 13. When the magnet 13a slides in the direction in which the magnet 13a approaches the power transmitter 12, the spring 13c is loaded in the compressed direction. The configuration described above allows the bit 13b to move in the upward/downward direction in such a way that the bit 13b follows a bolt 70, which will be described later.

The bit 13b wears due to a load exerted thereon when the bolt rotates. The configuration in which the bit 13b is attracted and fixed to the magnet 13a as in the present embodiment allows the bit 13b to be readily exchanged when the bit 13b has worn.

The rotational force produced by the second motor 30 is transmitted to a tension rod 15 via the second decelerator 31, a pinion gear 32, and an idle gear 33. That is, a drive gear 151, which is formed around the outer circumferential surface of the tension rod 15, engage with the idle gear 33,

and the second motor 30 can be operated to rotate the tension rod 15 around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction.

Bearings 34 are disposed to receive loads acting on the pinion gear 32 and the idle gear 33 when the shaft of the second motor 30 rotates. The idle gear 33 is rotationally driven around an idle shaft 35 extending in the upward/downward direction.

The tension rod 15 includes a tension accommodator 15a for accommodating the bit holder 13 and the bearing 14. A gap that allows rotation of the tension rod 15 is formed between the bit holder 13 and the tension rod 15. The tension rod 15 is rotatably supported by bearings 16 and a thrust bearing 17.

A tension rod female screw section 15a1 is formed in the inner radial surface of a lower end section of the tension rod 15. The tension rod female screw section 15a1 engages with a bolt male screw section formed around the bolt head section when the bolt is pulled. The engagement will be described later in detail.

A supporter 18 includes a supporter accommodator 18a for accommodating the tension rod 15. The upper end section of the supporter 18 is in contact with the thrust bearing 17, and the lower end section of the supporter 18 extends downward beyond the lower end section of the tension rod 15. Therefore, when the entire fastening device 100 lowers toward a fastening target object H, the lower end section of the supporter 18 comes into contact with the fastening target object H. A gap that allows rotation of the tension rod 15 is formed between the tension rod 15 and the supporter 18.

A sensor 181 is provided on the side facing the upper end of the supporter 18. The sensor 181 includes a straining element 181a and a strain gauge 181b. The straining element 181a has a cylindrical shape having a reduced-diameter intermediate section. The strain gauge 181b is attached to the intermediate section of the straining element 181a.

In the process of pulling the bolt, the straining element 181a receives upward force having the same magnitude as that of tensile force transmitted from the supporter 18 and is therefore distorted in the compression direction within an elastic deformation range of the straining element 181a. The strain gauge 181b changes in terms of resistance in accordance with the strain of the straining element 181a and changes output voltage to be outputted to the controller 5. The controller 5 calculates the tensile force acting on the screw section of the bolt based on the amount of change in the output voltage from the strain gauge 181b. The sensor 181 is not limited to the combination of the straining element 181a and the strain gauge 181b and can be another sensor capable of detecting the tensile force acting on the bolt.

The bolt to be tightened by the fastening device 100 according to the present embodiment will next be described with reference to FIGS. 2 and 3. FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the bolt and the fastening target object, and FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the bolt. The bolt 70 is a bolt with a hexagonal hole and is formed of a bolt shaft section 71 and a bolt head section 72. The bolt shaft section 71 has a male screw formed therearound. The fastening target object H (in other words, workpiece) is formed of fastening target objects H1 and H2, which are layered on each other in the upward/downward direction, and bolt holes H1a and H2a are formed in the fastening target objects H1 and H2, respectively.

The bolt 70 is inserted into the bolt holes H1a and H2a, and a nut 80 is caused to engage with the bolt shaft section 71 protruding downward beyond the end surface of the fastening target object H (H2). The bolt 70 is thus fastened

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to the fastening target object H. It is, however, noted that the invention of the present application is applicable to a fastener formed only of the bolt **70** with no nut **80**. In this case, forming a female screw section that engages with the male screw section of the bolt shaft section **71** in the circumferential surface of the bolt hole **H2a** allows the bolt **70** to be fastened to the fastening target object H.

An insertion hole **72b** having a hexagonal shape (corresponding to engagement receiving section) is formed in the top surface of the bolt head section **72**. A lower end section (corresponding to engagement section) of the bit **13b** can be inserted into the insertion hole **72b** and rotated to fasten the bolt **70** to the fastening target object H. A bolt head section male screw section **72a** is continuously formed around the side surface of the bolt head section **72** in the circumferential direction with no interruptions. Rotating the tension rod **15** allows the bolt **70** to be pulled with the tension rod female screw section **15a1** engaging with the bolt head section male screw section **72a**.

Now, let S1 be the area over which the supporter **18** and the fastening target object H are in contact with each other and S2 be the area over which the bolt head section **72** and the fastening target object H are in contact with each other, and it is desirable that the contact areas S1 and S2 are equal to each other. The seat surface of the bolt head section **72** and the supporter **18** exert surface pressure on the fastening target object H. Therefore, when the contact areas S1 and S2 differ from each other (that is, when difference in surface pressure is present), the amount of deformation of the fastening target object H undesirably differs from the amount of deformation in actual bolt fastening. Further, when the difference in surface pressure excessively increases, the supporter **18** is likely to deform and damage the fastening target object H, and the difference in the amount of deformation is likely to lower the fastening precision.

In the present embodiment, the insertion hole **72b** has a hexagonal shape, but not necessarily in the present invention, and the insertion hole **72b** may have an octagonal or any other polygonal shape. The invention of the present application is also applicable to a hexagonal bolt having a hexagonal bolt head section. In this case, an insertion hole **72b'** may be formed in the top surface of a bolt head section **72'**, and bolt head section male screw sections **72a'** may be intermittently formed at curved sections of the side surface of the bolt head section **72'**, as shown in FIG. 4(a). Further, the bolt head section male screw section **72a** (**72a'**) is not necessarily formed across the bolt head section **72** (**72'**) from the upper end to the lower end thereof and may instead be formed only part of the section from the upper end to the lower end as long as an engagement length necessary for the rotation of the tension rod **15** can be ensured.

In the present embodiment, the bit **13b** is inserted into the insertion hole **72b** formed in the bolt head section **72** to rotate the bolt **70**, but not necessarily in the present invention. Instead, a protrusion **72c** (corresponding to engagement receiving section) may be formed at the bolt head section **72** (**72'**), and the protrusion **72c** may be inserted into a recess (corresponding to engagement section) that is not shown but formed in the lower end section of the bit **13b** to rotate the bolt **70**, as shown in FIG. 4(b). That is, the invention of the present application is widely applicable to bolts each having a bolt head section male screw section formed around the side surface of the bolt head section and an engagement receiving section for engagement with the engagement section of the bit formed at the bolt head section. The invention

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of the present application is further applicable to a flanged bolt having a flange formed around the bolt head section.

The action of the fastening device **100** will next be described with reference to FIGS. 5 and 6, which are descriptive diagrams of the action. It is now assumed that the bolt **70** is temporarily attached to the fastening target object H, and that the bolt head section **72** is located in a temporal attachment position separate from the upper surface of the fastening target object H in an initial state (see FIG. 5(a)). It is further assumed that the bit **13b** is inserted into the insertion hole **72b** of the bolt head section **72**. It is assumed that the control described below is performed by the controller **5** unless otherwise stated.

When the first motor **10** is operated, the first decelerator **11**, the output shaft **11a**, the power transmitter **12**, and the bit holder **13** rotate, and the bit **13b** held by the bit holder **13** rotates in the direction indicated with the arrow K1. When the bit **13b** rotates, the bolt **70** screws downward. The fastening device **100** is so supported as to be allowed to lower by its own weight relative to a support section (not shown), and the entire fastening device **100** therefore lowers with the bit **13b** rotating. As a result, the tension rod female screw section **15a1** and the bolt head section male screw section **72a** become engageable with each other (see FIG. 5(b)).

When the bolt **70** further rotates and the bolt head section **72** is seated on the upper surface of the fastening target object H, the force that is received by the first motor **10** and attempts to rotate the shaft of the first motor **10** abruptly increases, resulting in an abrupt increase in feedback torque (see FIG. 5(c)). The controller **5** senses based on the feedback torque produced by the first motor **10** that the bolt **70** has been seated and stops the operation of the first motor **10**. The shaft of the first motor **10** is then reversely rotated in the direction indicated by the arrow K2 to move the bolt head section **72** back to the position slightly separate from the upper surface of the fastening target object H (see FIG. 5(d)).

Thereafter, the operation of the first motor **10** is stopped, and the second motor **30** is operated. When the second motor **30** is operated, the entire fastening device **100** moves downward with the tension rod **15** rotating in the direction indicated by the arrow K1, so that the tension rod female screw section **15a1** and the bolt head section male screw section **72a** engage with each other (see FIG. 6(e)). In this process, the bit **13b** slides upward in the interior of the bit holder **13** while resisting the elastic force provided by the spring **13c**.

When the tension rod **15** is further caused to screw downward while rotating, the lower end section of the supporter **18** comes into contact with the upper surface of the fastening target object H, so that the fastening device **100** stops lowering. Since the supporter **18** is in contact with the fastening target object H, an attempt to further rotate the tension rod **15** in the direction indicated with the arrow K1 cannot cause the tension rod **15** to screw downward. In this process, since the bit **13b** inserted into the insertion hole **72b** of the bolt head section **72** prevents the bolt **70** from rotating, the tension rod **15** exerts a load in the pulling direction (that is, upward) on the bolt **70**. However, since the supporter **18** is in contact with the fastening target object H, rotation of the tension rod **15** cannot move the bolt **70** in the pulling direction. As a result, tensile force P acts on the nut **80** and the supporter **18** (see FIG. 6(f)). Since the upper end section of the supporter **18** is in contact with the thrust bearing **17**, the thrust bearing **17** and the fastening target object H

compress the supporter **18**, and the compression force is detected as tensile force **P** with the sensor **181**.

A target value of the tensile force **P** is now defined as target tensile force (10 kN, for example). To prevent overshooting operation of the second motor **30**, it is desirable to decelerate the rotation of the shaft of the second motor **30** as the tensile force **P** approaches the target tensile force and stop the operation of the second motor **30** when the tensile force **P** reaches the target tensile force (corresponding to second step). The target tensile force is also target axial force acting on the bolt **70**.

The shaft of the first motor **10** is then caused to rotate again in the direction indicated with the arrow **K1** with the tensile force **P** applied to cause the bolt head section **72** to be seated on the fastening target object **H** (corresponding to third step). It is desirable that the tension rod female screw section **15a1** and the male screw formed around the bolt shaft section **71** have the same screw pitch. If the screw pitches differ from each other, the rotation control performed on the bit **13b** (that is, drive control performed on first motor **10**) and the rotation control performed on the tension rod **15** (that is, drive control performed on second motor **30**) need to be performed simultaneously, resulting in cumbersome control. On the other hand, when the screw pitches are equal to each other, the bolt is tightened only by rotation of the bit **13b**, resulting in no cumbersome synchronous control.

When the bolt head section **72** comes into contact with the fastening target object **H**, the tensile force **P** starts decreasing, whereas axial force **F** acting on the bolt **70** increases (see FIGS. **6(g)** and **7**). The derivative of the tensile force **P**,  $dP/d\theta$ , is regularly monitored, and the rotation of the bit **13b** is stopped when the behavior of  $dP/d\theta$  changes from an unstable curve (nonlinear region) to a straight line (corresponding to fourth step). The term “ $d\theta$ ” corresponds to the angle of rotation of the bolt **70**.

Finally, the shaft of the second motor **30** is rotated in the direction opposite the direction at the time of bolt tightening to retract the fastening device **100** from the fastening target object **H** and cause the bolt head section **72** and the tension rod **15** to disengage from each other (see FIG. **6(h)**). At this point, the axial force **F** acting on the bolt **70** shows a value close to the target tensile force, whereby precise axial force **F** can be provided.

In the present embodiment, the operation of tightening the bolt **70** is stopped when the axial force becomes greater than the target axial force **F** to cause the bolt head section **72** and the tension rod **15** to disengage from each other, as shown in FIG. **7**. When the operation of tightening the bolt **70** is stopped immediately after the bolt **70** is seated on the fastening target object **H** to cause the bolt head section **72** and the tension rod **15** to disengage from each other, the axial force decreases by the amount corresponding to the elastic deformation of the bolt **70** and the fastening target object **H**. A decrease  $\sigma$  representing the decrease described above corresponds to the difference between the axial force produced when the behavior of  $dP/d\theta$  changes from a curve to a straight line and the target axial force **F**. It is, however, noted that the tensile force **P** may be set in advance at a value greater by the decrease  $\sigma$  in expectation of the decrease in the axial force after the bolt **70** is seated, and the operation of tightening the bolt **70** may be stopped immediately after the bolt **70** is seated. In this case, when the bolt head section **72** and the tension rod **15** are caused to disengage from each other, the axial force acting on the bolt **70** decreases toward the target axial force **F**.

#### Second Embodiment

FIG. **8** is a cross-sectional view of a fastening device **200**. FIG. **9** is a perspective view of part of the bolt. A bolt **90**

includes a bolt head section **91** and a bolt shaft section **92**. A bottomed, tubular head section opening **91a** (corresponding to recess) is formed in the top surface of the bolt head section **91**, and a head section female screw section **91b** is formed in the inner circumferential surface of the head section opening **91a**. A male screw **92a** is formed around the bolt shaft section **92**. The bolt **90** is fastened along with a nut **93** (see FIGS. **10** and **11**), which will be described later, to the fastening target object **H**. The fastening target object **H** is the same as that in the first embodiment and will therefore not be described.

The fastening device **200** includes a first motor **210**, a second motor **220**, and an enclosure **223**. The first motor **210** and the second motor **220** are independent of each other and driven and controlled by a controller **9**. That is, the controller **9** can control the first motor **210** and the second motor **220** independently of each other. The controller **9** can, for example, be a CPU (central processing unit).

The enclosure **223** includes a body **223a** and a base **223b**, which has a recessed upper end fixed to the lower surface of the body **223a**. The body **223a** accommodates a first decelerator **211** and a second decelerator **221**. A tension rod **201** for rotating the bolt **90** protrudes beyond the lower surface of the enclosure **223**. A columnar protrusion **201a** having a columnar shape (corresponding to projection) is provided at the lower end section of the tension rod **201**, and a rod male screw section **201b** are formed around the outer circumferential surface of the columnar protrusion **201a**.

The rotational force produced by the first motor **210** is transmitted to the tension rod **201** via the first decelerator **211**, and the tension rod **201** rotates around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction. Rotating the tension rod **201** with the rod male screw section **201b** of the tension rod **201** and the head section female screw section **91b** engaging with each other allows the bolt **90** to be tightened. The fastening device **200** is so supported as to be allowed to lower by its own weight relative to a support section (not shown). Therefore, when the bolt **90** screws toward the fastening target object **H**, the entire fastening device **200** lowers along with the bolt **90**.

The second motor **220** is located next to the first motor **210** in a side-by-side fashion and connected to a second decelerator **221** located immediately below the second motor **220**. The second decelerator **221** decelerates the rotation inputted from the second motor **220** and outputs the decelerated rotation via an output shaft **229**. The output shaft **229** is so supported as to be rotatable relative to a bearing **222**.

The rotational force produced by the second motor **220** is transmitted to a drive socket **202** via the second decelerator **221**, the output shaft **229**, a pinion gear **227**, and an idle gear **228**. That is, a drive gear **316**, which is formed around the outer circumferential surface of the drive socket **202**, engage with the idle gear **228**, and the second motor **220** can be operated to rotate the drive socket **202** around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction.

Bearings **225** are disposed to receive loads acting on the pinion gear **227** and the idle gear **228** when the shaft of the second motor **220** rotates. The idle gear **228** is rotationally driven via an idle shaft **226** extending in the upward/downward direction.

The drive socket **202** protrudes beyond the lower surface of the enclosure **223**. The drive socket **202** is so supported as to be rotatable relative to a pair of upper and lower bearings **217a**, **217b** and a bearing **312**. A retaining ring **216** is provided to prevent the upper bearing **217a** from falling off.

The drive socket **202** has a tubular shape and accommodates the tension rod **201**. A bolt head section grasper **202a**, which protrudes inward in the radial direction, is formed at a lower end section of the drive socket **202**. The inner radial surface of the bolt head section grasper **202a** has a shape corresponding to the side surface of the bolt head section **91** (that is, hexagonal shape in the present embodiment). Rotating the drive socket **202** with the bolt head section grasper **202a** fit to the bolt head section **91** allows the bolt **90** to screw relative to the fastening target object H. An attempt to rotate the bolt **90** via the tension rod **201** with the drive socket **202** being stationary cannot rotate the bolt **90** because the bolt head section grasper **202a** grasps the bolt head section **91**.

A supporter **203** includes a supporter accommodator **203a** for accommodating the drive socket **202**. The upper end section of the supporter **203** is in contact with the bearing **217b**, and the lower end section of the supporter **203** extends downward beyond the lower end section of the drive socket **202**. Therefore, when the entire fastening device **200** lowers toward the fastening target object H, the lower end section of the supporter **203** comes into contact with the fastening target object H. A gap that allows the rotation of the drive socket **202** is formed between the drive socket **202** and the supporter **203**.

Now, let S1 be the area over which the supporter **203** and the fastening target object H are in contact with each other and S2 be the area over which the bolt head section **91** and the fastening target object H are in contact with each other, and it is desirable that the contact areas S1 and S2 are equal to each other. The seat surface of the bolt head section **91** and the supporter **203** exert surface pressure on the fastening target object H. Therefore, when the contact areas S1 and S2 differ from each other (that is, when difference in surface pressure is present), the amount of deformation of the fastening target object H undesirably differs from the amount of deformation in actual bolt fastening. Further, when the difference in surface pressure excessively increases, the supporter **203** is likely to deform and damage the fastening target object H, and the difference in the amount of deformation is likely to lower the fastening precision.

A sensor **21** includes a straining element **213** and a strain gauge **214**. The straining element **213** has a cylindrical shape having a reduced-diameter intermediate section. The straining element **213** can be made of metal. The straining element **213** is disposed radially outside the tension rod **201** and between the decelerator **211** and the drive socket **202**. The upper portion of the straining element **213** is pressed by the decelerator **211** via a thrust bearing **212**. A lower portion of the straining element **213** is supported by the drive socket **202** via a thrust bearing **215**. The strain gauge **214** is attached to the intermediate section of the straining element **213**. The sensor **21** may instead be provided in the supporter **203**.

In the process of pulling the bolt **90**, the straining element **213** receives upward force having the same magnitude as that of tensile force transmitted from the supporter **203** and is therefore distorted in the compression direction within an elastic deformation range of the straining element **213**. The strain gauge **214** changes in terms of resistance in accordance with the strain of the straining element **213** and changes output voltage to be outputted to the controller **9**. The controller **9** calculates the tensile force acting on the screw section of the bolt **90** based on the amount of change in the output voltage from the strain gauge **214**. Thrust bearings **212** and **215**, which are provided on the upper and

lower sides of the sensor **21**, have the function of suppressing transmission of turbulent force received from an object other than the supporter **203** to the sensor **21**. The sensor **21** is not limited to the combination of the straining element **213** and the strain gauge **214** and can be another sensor capable of detecting the tensile force acting on the bolt **90**.

The action of the fastening device **200** will next be described with reference to FIGS. **10** and **11**, which are descriptive diagrams of the action. It is now assumed that the bolt **90** is temporarily attached to the fastening target object H, and that the bolt head section **91** is located in a temporal attachment position separate from the upper surface of the fastening target object H in an initial state (see FIG. **10(a)**). It is further assumed that the bolt head section grasper **202a** of the drive socket **202** grasps an upper end section of the bolt head section **91**. It is still further assumed that the columnar protrusion **201a** of the tension rod **201** is in contact with the upper end of the head section female screw section **91b** of the bolt head section **91**. It is still further assumed that the control described below is performed by the controller **9** unless otherwise stated.

When the second motor **220** is operated, the second decelerator **221**, the output shaft **229**, the pinion gear **227**, the idle gear **228**, and the drive gear **316** rotate, and the bolt **90** grasped by the grasper **202a** of the drive socket **202** rotates in the direction indicated by the arrow **K1** (in other words, clockwise direction in plan view). When the drive socket **202** rotates, the bolt **90** screws downward. The fastening device **200** is so supported as to be allowed to lower by its own weight relative to a support section (not shown), and the entire fastening device **200** therefore lowers with the drive socket **202** rotating.

When the drive socket **202** further rotates the bolt **90** in the direction indicated by the arrow **K1** and the bolt head section **91** is seated on the upper surface of the fastening target object H, the force that is received by the second motor **220** and attempts to rotate the shaft of the second motor **220** abruptly increases, resulting in an abrupt increase in the feedback torque. The controller **9** senses based on the feedback torque produced by the second motor **220** that the bolt **90** has been seated and stops the operation of the second motor **220**. FIG. **10(b)** shows the state immediately after the operation of the second motor **220** is stopped.

After the operation of the second motor **220** is stopped, the second motor **220** is so operated that the shaft thereof rotates in the opposite direction to rotate the drive socket **202** in the direction indicated with the arrow **K2** (in other words, counterclockwise direction in plan view). When the drive socket **202** is rotated in the direction indicated with the arrow **K2**, the bolt **90** screws upward, and the tension rod **201**, the drive socket **202**, and the supporter **203** integrally move upward. The bolt head section **91** thus moves to a position slightly separate from the upper surface of the fastening target object H (in other words, tension rod drive start position). FIG. **10(c)** shows the state immediately after the bolt **90** reaches the tension rod drive start position.

Thereafter, the operation of the second motor **220** is stopped, and the first motor **210** is operated. When the first motor **210** is operated, the tension rod **201** screws toward the bottom surface of the head section opening **91a** of the bolt head section **91** while rotating in the direction indicated by the arrow **K1**, and the drive socket **202** and the supporter **203** lower along with the tension rod **201** toward the fastening target object H. FIG. **11(d)** shows the state in a halfway position where the tension rod **201**, the drive socket **202**, and the supporter **203** lower toward the fastening target object H.

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The position of the bolt **90** does not change in the course of transition from the step shown in FIG. **10(c)** to the step shown in FIG. **11(d)**.

When the tension rod **201** further screws, the lower end section of the supporter **203** comes into contact with the upper surface of the fastening target object H, so that the fastening device **200** stops lowering. FIG. **11(e)** shows the state immediately after the supporter **203** comes into contact with the upper surface of the fastening target object H. Since the supporter **203** is in contact with the fastening target object H, an attempt to further rotate the tension rod **201** in the direction indicated with the arrow **K1** cannot cause the tension rod **201** to screw downward.

In this process, since the grasper **202a** of the drive socket **202** prevents the bolt **90** from rotating, the tension rod **201** exerts a load in the pulling direction (that is, upward) on the bolt **90**. However, since the supporter **203** is in contact with the fastening target object H, rotation of the tension rod **201** cannot move the bolt **90** in the pulling direction. As a result, tensile force **P** acts on the nut **93** and the supporter **203** (see FIG. **11(e)**). In this process, the members (such as straining element **213**) sandwiched between the thrust bearing **212** and the supporter **203** are compressed, and the compression force is detected as tensile force **P** with the strain gauge **214**.

A target value of the tensile force **P** is now defined as target tensile force (10 kN, for example). To prevent overshooting operation of the first motor **210**, it is desirable to decelerate the rotation of the shaft of the first motor **210** as the tensile force **P** approaches the target tensile force and stop the operation of the first motor **210** when the tensile force **P** reaches the target tensile force. The target tensile force is also target axial force acting on the bolt **90**.

The shaft of the second motor **220** is then caused to rotate again in the direction indicated with the arrow **K1** with the tensile force **P** applied to cause only the bolt **90** out of the tension rod **201**, the drive socket **202**, the supporter **203**, and the bolt **90** to screw downward. In other words, the bolt **90** moves in the direction in which the bolt **90** is pulled out of the tension rod **201**. When the bolt **90** further screws downward, the bolt head section **91** is seated on the fastening target object H. It is desirable that the head section female screw section **91b** and the male screw **92a** of the bolt shaft section **92** have the same screw pitch. If the screw pitches differ from each other when performing from the step shown in FIG. **11(e)** to the step shown in FIG. **11(f)**, the rotation control performed on the tension rod **201** (that is, drive control performed on first motor **210**) and the rotation control performed on the drive socket **202** (that is, drive control performed on second motor **220**) need to be performed simultaneously, resulting in cumbersome control. On the other hand, when the screw pitches are equal to each other, the bolt **90** is tightened only by rotation of the drive socket **202**, resulting in no cumbersome control.

When the bolt head section **91** comes into contact with the fastening target object H, the tensile force **P** starts decreasing, whereas axial force **F** acting on the bolt **90** increases (see FIGS. **11(f)** and **7**). The derivative of the tensile force **P**,  $dP/d\theta$ , is regularly monitored, and the rotation of the drive socket **202** is stopped when the behavior of  $dP/d\theta$  changes from an unstable curve (nonlinear region) to a straight line. The term “ $d\theta$ ” corresponds to the angle of rotation of the bolt **90**.

Finally, the shaft of the first motor **210** is rotated in the direction opposite the direction at the time of bolt tightening to retract the tension rod **201** to a position above the bolt head section **91** and cause the drive socket **202** and the bolt head section **91** to disengage from each other. The bolt **90** is

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thus removed from the fastening device **200**. At this point, the axial force **F** acting on the bolt **90** shows a value close to the target tensile force, whereby precise axial force **F** can be provided.

Example of Other Usage of Fastening Device **100**

In the embodiments described above, the fastening device **100 (200)** is used to newly tighten the bolt **70 (90)**, but not necessarily in the present invention, and the fastening device **100 (200)** may be used to retighten the existing bolt **70 (90)** determined to have insufficient axial force in an axial force detection step. For example, when bolts are successively fastened to a flange-shaped multi-axis workpiece (fastening target object), the axial force acting on a bolt fastened in an early stage of the fastening process decreases in some cases. In such cases, after the fastening device **100 (200)** fastens the bolt, the axial force acting on the bolt can be detected by pulling the bolt. An axial force detection theory is described in Japanese Patent No. 4,028,254 and will therefore not be described in detail. When it is determined that the axial force is insufficient as a result of the axial force detection, the fastening device **100 (200)** can perform retightening to manage the axial force with higher reliability. Moreover, the fastening devices **100 (200)** according to the embodiments of the present invention can be arranged (in the form of a matrix, for example) and simultaneously tighten a plurality of bolts **70 (90)**. For example, even in the case of a multi-axis workpiece, such as bolts for a cylinder head of an engine, the fastening devices **100 (200)** can perform simultaneous tightening, whereby stable axial force is provided across the entire product, resulting in improvement in the quality of the product.

## REFERENCE SIGNS LIST

- 5, 9**: Controller
- 10, 210**: First motor
- 11, 211**: First decelerator
- 11a**: Output shaft
- 12**: Power transmitter
- 13**: Bit holder
- 13a**: Magnet
- 13b**: Bit
- 13c**: Spring
- 14**: Bearing
- 15, 201**: Tension rod
- 15a1**: Tension rod female screw section
- 18, 203**: Supporter
- 30, 220**: Second motor
- 70**: Bolt
- 71**: Bolt shaft section
- 72**: Bolt head section
- 72a**: Bolt head section male screw section
- 72b**: Insertion hole
- 100**: Fastening device
- 200**: Fastening device

The invention claimed is:

**1.** A fastening device for fastening a bolt to a fastening target object, the bolt being so configured that a bolt head section male screw section is formed around a side surface of a bolt head section and an engagement receiving section is formed at a top surface of the bolt head section, the fastening device comprising:

a tension rod including a rod female screw section that engages with the bolt head section male screw section;

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a bit that is so disposed inside the tension rod as to be movable in an upward/downward direction, includes an engagement section that engages with the engagement receiving section, and rotates the bolt around an axis extending in the upward/downward direction with the engagement receiving section engaging with the engagement section;

a supporter that is disposed in a position where the supporter circumferentially surrounds the tension rod and has a lower end section protruding downward beyond a lower end section of the tension rod;

a sensor for sensing compression force acting on the supporter in the upward/downward direction;

a first motor for rotating the bit around the axis;

a second motor for rotating the tension rod around the axis; and

a controller for controlling the first motor and the second motor,

wherein the controller controls the first and the second motors to carry out a first process, a second process and a third process such that

the first process is a process of pulling the bolt via the tension rod by controlling the second motor in a state where the supporter is in contact with the fastening target object,

the second process is a process of stopping the second motor when the tensile force reaches the target tensile force in the first process, and

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the third process is a process of rotating the bit around the axis and fastening the bolt by controlling the first motor.

2. The fastening device according to claim 1, wherein a bolt shaft male screw section is formed around a shaft section of the bolt, and

the rod female screw section and the bolt shaft male screw section have the same screw pitch.

3. The fastening device according to claim 1, wherein a tubular holder is disposed inside the tension rod, and

a magnet, the bit attracted by the magnet, and a spring that urges the magnet downward are disposed in the holder.

4. The fastening device according to claim 1, wherein the engagement receiving section is an insertion hole, and the engagement section is a lower end section of the bit inserted into the insertion hole.

5. The fastening device according to claim 1, wherein in tightening the bolt, the controller operates (1) the second motor to rotate the bit in a first direction, (2) the second motor to stop, (3) the first motor to rotate the tension rod in the first direction, (4) the first motor to stop based on the sensor, and (5) the second motor to rotate the bit in the first direction, and then to stop.

\* \* \* \* \*